

Are You Saved?

Pastor Joseph Clark – July 17, 2020

Only through repentance and faith in Christ can anyone be saved. No religious activity will be sufficient, only true faith in Jesus Christ alone.

- Ravi Zacharias

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him.”

- John 3:16-17

I have a question to ask you today. It is without a doubt the most important question that anyone will ever ask you in this lifetime. It is inarguably the most important question that you or I will ever ask ourselves in this lifetime.

“Are you saved?” Three little words. “Are you saved?” A short, simple sentence.

“Are you saved?” In order to correctly answer this question, we must understand what is meant when we say “Saved”.

I googled this and found a pretty good definition on a website entitled Quora. The definition read:

“Generally, to be saved means that Jesus Christ performed an atoning sacrifice that would ransom all of those that have ever lived so they could return to God's presence. They have literally been saved from the effects of physical and spiritual death, as part of God's plan for His children.”

A Christian website called Crosswalk.com defines being saved as:

“being saved, aka salvation, speaks of receiving deliverance from our greatest problem; namely, the many consequences of our sin against our Holy God.”

Another website, entitled Christianity.com, speaks of being saved or salvation as:

“Salvation is an amazing miracle we watch unfold in our lives. The view of salvation as a ticket to heaven or an escape-hell card, ignores life here on earth. The salvation that Jesus secured with His death and resurrection is one that restores a believer’s oneness with God (Romans 5:10). This provision of unity ushers in wholeness, one piece of truth at a time through the power of Christ’s love. Jesus came to give us abundant life. In salvation, Jesus Christ transforms us from the inside out.”

The brilliant theologian, author, and pastor Max Lucado is quoted as saying:

“The purpose of the Bible is simply to proclaim God’s plan to save His children. It asserts that man is lost and needs to be saved. And it communicates the message that Jesus is the God in the flesh sent to save His children.”

Here is an excerpt from a website: UMC.ORG, people of the United Methodist Church:

“The phrase being saved in the Christian tradition carries with it the obvious assumption that someone is in need of rescuing. It implies that one needs to be freed from imminent danger; that a life is imperiled; that dreams, hopes, and aspirations are all very near to being lost. Being saved in the Christian faith is really a two-part experience: being saved from something and being saved to something.”

Imminent danger and peril? Yikes. We require saving from imminent danger and peril. What danger and peril? Would anyone like to hazard a guess as to what we are being saved from?

Those of us who have attended church since we were children will recall sermon upon sermon in which we have been told that we are being saved from sin. We have been told that we cannot possibly live sin-free, so our salvation begins here on Earth, and we are delivered from a life of sin if we accept Christ and walk with God. The old covenant was dependent on the Law. It was dependent on the Ten Commandments. However, since we are flawed beings, and we cannot possibly live an entire life without breaching these commandments, we are saved by the new covenant of Jesus Christ. The new covenant which is a personal relationship between us and God with Jesus as our advocate. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, nobody comes to Father, except through me." John 14:6. Peter said "there is salvation in no one else. We have been given no other name under heaven by God, by which we must be saved." Acts 4:12. He was referring to preaching in the name of Jesus Christ.

Can we live our entire life sin free? No. But our sins will be forgiven if we receive Jesus Christ as our saviour. A life of sin means a life without God. A life without God means eternal damnation. Make no mistake. Let us continue this qualification by turning to the Bible:

John 3:16-17 says

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him."

That whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. Should not perish.

Matthew 25:30

"And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

2 Peter 3:7

“But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.”

Matthew 7:13-14

“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.”

Jesus himself says in Mark 9:43-45

“And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell.”

Jesus Christ talked more about “Hell”, than anyone else in the Bible. Theologians suggest that the term “Hell” appears between 23 and 54 times in the Holy Bible. It is referred to as Hades, and Lake of Fire, and Eternal Darkness. I believe that it should be taken quite literally. I believe that the Bible says that Hell is a place.

We can conclude that the immediate danger for us is a life of sin. The long-term danger is eternal damnation.

As Christians we do not get to pick or choose what parts of the Bible we believe and what parts we do not believe. We do not get to comfort ourselves by determining what parts are hyperbole and symbolism and what parts are literal. We must -nay, do we risk- anything less than taking it as literal? As Christians, we believe that the Bible is the unerring word of God. Written in human hands and inspired and lead by the Holy Spirit. It is not just a book like a dictionary, or a thesaurus, or an encyclopedia. It is the word of God. The God. The one and only Most High. And when God as His own incarnation on Earth as man in the form of God the Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, says that there is a Hell, I am inclined to take Him at His word.

Brothers and sisters, what God has told us in human terms in the Holy Bible is that we must be saved from a life of sin. We must resist the temptations of the tempter, the enemy, the accuser. Lucifer. Satan. The devil. What the Bible tells us is that to be saved means that we are saved from a life of exclusion from God's kingdom. God's kingdom on Earth begins when we are saved here on Earth and it continues when we are judged and received in Heaven, aka "Paradise," as Jesus referred to it when he addressed the criminal on the cross.

To be saved means that we are saved from a life of sin without God here on earth, and a death of eternal damnation after our bodies expire.

We are not human beings on spiritual journey, we are spiritual beings on a temporary human journey.

To be saved means to be saved from death. There is a very popular television program called *The Walking Dead*. My teenagers used to watch it. Much to my chagrin. It is a horror program in which dead bodies walk around in search of living human beings to feed off of. Like I said, it is a horror program. But I believe that we are walking dead in sin until we are saved. The Apostle Paul wrote that once we are saved, we are dead to sin.

Consider the following verses:

1 Timothy 5:6

But she who gives herself to wanton pleasure is dead even while she lives.

Ephesians 5:14

For this reason, it says, "Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you."

John 6:53

So, Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves."

Proverbs 21:16

A man who wanders from the way of understanding Will rest in the assembly of the dead.

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Ephesians 2:1

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,

Brothers and sisters: Are you saved?

God has communicated to us in The Word that unless we are saved, we are dead already in sin. We are dead in a life on Earth without God. We are dead for all of eternity in eternal damnation. So now that we know what it is that we are to be saved from, what does it mean to be saved? It means an eternity with Christ that begins here on Earth the moment that you receive Him. The moment that you are saved. The moment that you are “Born Again”. It means a life in which we abandon the key emphasis being on ourselves, but rather a life in which we wash each other’s feet as Christ did. A life in which we love the Lord our God above all others. A life in which we celebrate our walk with God. A life in which we “Love the Lord our God with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our minds, and with all our strength. And that we love our neighbours as ourselves.” As Jesus directed us in Matthew 22:37.

Brother and sisters, to be saved means a life of love. The love of Christ. A life with the assurance that no matter what hardships we face on this Earth, we are assured to join our saviour Jesus Christ. But not just this. We are sinners. And to be saved means that in this life, right now, we can have the assurance that when we trip up, when we fall, when we sin, there is hope in our Lord and Saviour. There is forgiveness.

Brennan Manning wrote:

“Because salvation is by grace through faith, I believe that among the countless number of people standing in front of the throne and in front of the Lamb, dressed in white robes and holding palms in their hands (see Revelation 7:9), I shall see the prostitute from the Kit-Kat Ranch in Carson City, Nevada, who tearfully told me that she could find no other employment to support her two-year-old son. I shall see the woman who had an abortion and is haunted by guilt and remorse but did the best she could faced with grueling alternatives; the businessman besieged with debt who sold his integrity in a series of desperate transactions; the insecure clergyman addicted to being liked, who never challenged his people from the pulpit and longed for unconditional love; the sexually abused teen molested by his father and now selling his body on the street, who, as he falls asleep each night after his last 'trick', whispers the name of the unknown God he learned about in Sunday school. 'But how?' we ask. Then the voice says, 'They have washed their robes and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb.' There they are. There **we** are - the multitude who so wanted to be faithful, who at times got defeated, soiled by life, and bested by trials, wearing the bloodied garments of life's tribulations, but through it all clung to faith. “

END of QUOTE

My friends, if this is not good news to you, you have never understood the Gospel of Grace. If this is not Heaven on Earth, I do not know what is. To be assured of God's love and forgiveness no matter what injustice or disease or hardship befalls you. When all around us is out of our control, the one thing that is within our control is our choice to have faith and to be saved.

But wait, that is just the beginning.

In Matthew 22:30, Jesus corrects the Pharisees and in doing so he describes Heaven.

29 Jesus replied, “You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God.”

30 “At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven.”

31 “But about the resurrection of the dead—have you not read what God said to you,”

32 “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.”

33 “When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at his teaching.”

In John 14:1-3

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”

Luke 23:43

43 Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

Brothers and sisters, what a wonderful thought. Eternal salvation in Paradise. The Bible tells us that God is in Heaven. That Christ awaits us in Heaven. Imagine what this will be like. To be reunited with those we love who have gone before us.

The Bible is a very thick book. If we look at it from the side, we see the thickness of all of its pages. Our life on earth is just the thickness of one single page compared to the thickness of all the other pages of the Bible combined, which could be compared to our eternal salvation.

Are you saved?

There are roughly 2.2 Billion people on Earth who call themselves Christians. Are they all saved from the power and penalty of sin? No.

There are Christians who pray. Praying is what saved Christians do, but prayer in itself does not save us. Attending Church? No. Going to church is something that saved Christians do, but it does not in itself save them. Reading the Bible? No. Many people read the Bible, but it does not make them saved.

Many people believe in God. It does not make them saved. Many people believe that Jesus walked the Earth. It does not make them saved. Many people say: "I believe...something, but I don't know what I believe."

How are we saved?

In Sunday school we were instructed that it is easy as A, B, C.

A - Accept that we are sinners and that we cannot save ourselves

B – Believe in the living Christ as our Lord and Saviour, and that eternal salvation comes through Him.

C – Confess as a vocal witness your faith in Jesus Christ as the Messiah.

The Apostle Paul writes in Romans 10:9-10

"That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved."

John 5:24 "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes Him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life."

Earlier I referred to John 14:6, when Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. nobody comes to the Father except through me." Jesus did not say, I am a way. He said, "I am THE Way." He did not say, short is the path and wide is the door. He did not say, I am the Saviour, but Buddha is a pretty good guy too. Take your pick. He did not say, I am The Way, but so is Muhammed. He did not say, believe in Me, but believe in the many Hindu gods as well.

In today's 21st Century information age, what I am saying here is very unpopular and politically incorrect.

"Blessed are all those who are persecuted in the name of Jesus Christ or for Righteousness sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." – Matthew 5:10

To be saved, we must not just believe in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. We must receive Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour. We must accept that Jesus is the only way, the only truth, the only life, and that He is the only way to the Father. We must be born again from a life of sin and death to THE way, THE truth, and THE life. A life as a child in Christ's kingdom. And, we must be vocal witnesses.

Jesus said in Matthew 10:32-33

“Whoever acknowledges Me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns Me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.”

Are you saved?

How many Christians evangelize? How many Christians are vocal witnesses? How many Christians wear a cross on the outside of their shirts, regardless of what part of town they are in or what country they are in, or regardless of the occasion? How many Christians would be willing to walk through a major North American city in this day and age with a T-Shirt which read I LOVE JESUS in big, bold letters. Fearlessly.

I was once asked if I was a Jesus Freak. I answered. “Brother, I swim in the deepest end of the Jesus Freak pool. I am a Jesus freak, a Jesus lover, a Jesus nerd, and anything else you wish to categorize me as, if it pertains to my love of Jesus. The question is, why aren't you?”

In Romans, 5:1-2, Paul writes, "Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God."

He also writes in Ephesians 2:8

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God"

Are you saved?

For me it was one fateful and glorious day, when I had lost all hope and decided to take my life. I was raised since I was a child in a Christian household and a Christian school and a Christian Church. I believed in God. I believed in Jesus. If you asked me if I loved Jesus, I would have answered with “certainly”. But as an adult I began searching for truths in multiple faiths, multiple philosophies, multiple self-transformation systems. I had made the acquisition of wealth, and material possessions, and status and success idols in my life. After multiple humbling experiences, a major betrayal, an exasperating marriage which was full of distrust, and paranoia, and immeasurable heartache for me, life had become a process of death by a thousand papercuts. I had spent years in a major depression. So, in that state, while I was in a hotel room during business travel, I concluded that my children and my parents, siblings, and friends would be better off without me. A vision came to me of my children crying out for me and I was not there to comfort them. They were crying out for me because they had me informed that I was dead.

It was at that time, alone in that hotel room, I fell-down on my knees and I proclaimed to God:

“Lord Jesus Christ, save me. I cannot do this alone. I cannot live like this anymore. I give myself to You unconditionally. You are the only Way. I will discontinue researching various faiths and I buy into You entirely. I receive You as my Lord and Saviour and I am Your child, Your disciple. No matter how difficult it might be at times for my puny human scientific mind to believe certain aspects of the Bible, I shall choose to believe out of faith. I am a sinner and I seek Your forgiveness and Your salvation.”

From that moment forward, I was an evangelist, a dedicated disciple of Jesus Christ, and my depression was replaced with a thirst to know God. Ever since, I have been dedicated to glorifying God through ministry, worship, and devoting myself to God and His word.

Brothers and sisters. are you saved?

Do you accept that you and I are sinners?

Do you believe in the living Christ and that He is your Lord and Saviour?

Do you reject Satan and all of his evil works, and accept Christ?

Do you believe that Jesus Christ died for your sins, was resurrected from the dead, and ascended into Heaven?

Do you believe that Jesus Christ will come again to judge the living and the dead?

Do you believe in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit?

Do you believe that Christ is the Way the Truth, and the Life? and that nobody comes to the Father except through Him?

Do you believe that there is salvation in no one else, that God has given us no other name under Heaven by which we must be saved but by that of Jesus Christ?

If you truly believe that the answer to all of this is honestly “YES! WITH ALL MY HEART!” then you are saved.

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